The Southern PATRIOT

Vol. 13. No. 10 Published by the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc. December, 1955

It is unusual that the Southern Patriot *should devote so much of its space to one section of the South—in this case, Louisiana. Nor has it been our policy to give such prominence to strife and contention during the holiday season. But Louisiana at this time is the major battleground in the Deep South. Here, because of the religious and racial diversity of the population and because of a cosmopolitan culture in its major city, there is a chance to balk the forces that have prevailed in Georgia, South Carolina and Mississippi. There is even a chance that a new Southern "tradition"—one of decency in human relations may be born here. If we have violated the Christmas heritage of peace, it is because those who do not bear good will toward all men acknowledge no time of peace.*

Integration Forum Held Despite Smears

"New Orleans, Louisiana, is just a smear's throw from the Mississippi line," one citizen of the Crescent City observed drily this month as the New Orleans Young Men's Business Club, American Legion, and the Orleans Parish school board did their best to make a mockery of Human Rights Week.

Their announced target was the SCEF. In the process they impugned the basic rights of free speech and assembly of the city's citizens; they merchandized slander against respected individuals; they attempted to disguise their racist bias with a show of super-patriotism.

But the real story in the event is that of the 100 New Orleanians who stood up against this barrage and defended their right to sponsor a public forum on desegregation in the public schools. Never before in the deep South has an interracial group of equal prominence backed a discussion of the ways and means to integration.

The chain of events began in mid-November when a group of New Orleans board members of the SCEF decided it would be an appropriate observance of Human Rights Day to have a public forum on school integration, with a featured speaker from one of the cities where desegregation has occurred. This idea gained wide support, and soon there were more than a hundred sponsors for the event.

Sponsorship was on an individual basis, rather than by organizations, and Rabbi Julian B. Feibelman, an SCEF board member, obtained from the Orleans school board permission to use Rabouin School auditorium.

Acting Mayor Victor Schiro was asked to proclaim Dec. 10-15 as Human Rights Week. One day late in November the mayor's office telephoned to say that the proclamation had been signed. A few minutes afterward the secretary called again to announce a mistake had been made—Acting Mayor Schiro (regular Mayor Morrison is off campaigning for governor) "could not issue a proclamation on human rights."

On December 6 the storm broke. The Young Men's Business Club, after passing a resolution urging all citizens to boycott the forum because of the SCEF's part in it, sent all sponsors a 47-page mish-mash of slander and distortion compiled from the Eastland report on the SCEF, the American Legion's "Firing Line" and the editorial pages of New Orleans' most doggedly Dixiecratic newspaper, the States. Characteristically, not a single mention was made of any activity conducted by the SCEF—guilt by association and the fantasies of professional informers provided the tainted meat of the document. The sponsors were asked by the YMBC to disassociate themselves from the forum.

The following day the Orleans Parish School Board met and rescinded its written agreement to permit use of the auditorium. Another school auditorium was used by the White Citizens Council of New Orleans for a meeting, seemingly without a qualm on the part of the board members.

However, the board dared not slam the door completely on the project. "There are some very substantial people on the forum," one member warned his colleagues. And even though another member huffed and puffed about "good citizens" being used as a "front," the board announced it would consider an application from Rabbi Feibelman "and his group" if they held a meeting "on their own, with no connection with the SCEF."

The Reverend Allen Hackett . . . speaker at forum

On Dec. 8, some 40 of the sponsors met to consider this development. Besides the YMBC assault and the newspaper publicity, the American Legion Carrollton Post No. 228 voted unanimously to commend the YMBC for its action and warned all citizens and civic groups "to be careful to whom and to what causes they lend their good names." (Seconding the Legion resolution was one Kent Courtney, chairman of Americanism for the First District of the Legion. Courtney was reported in the press as hovering around the recent Southern Governors Conference trying to rouse support for a third political party which would back Senator McCarthy for President.)

The sponsors refused to disavow the SCEF. They voted to continue support of the forum, and to elect a coordinating committee who would apply for the auditorium as individuals. They were Mrs. James E. Friend, the Rev. Samuel Gandy, chaplain at Dillard University, Mrs. S. S. Labouisse, the Rev. John H. Telfer, program coordinator for the United Packinghouse Workers, and Arthur Wright, business man.

This committee met with the Superintendent of Schools and the president of the board, on Dec. 9. The board stalled its decision until Dec. 12, forcing postponement of the forum scheduled for that day.

(Continued on Page 2.)

Dr. Jim Crow Has His Wings Clipped

The Orleans Parish school board, besides attempting to "pocket veto" a forum on desegregation in New Orleans, also produced a tawdry defense of Jim Crow schools this month.

In a brief submitted Dec. 10 to the three-man federal court now considering the NAACP suit challenging school segregation in New Orleans, the board argued that integration would lower educational standards and create a health menace.

To buttress its reasoning, the board enclosed statements by various medical officials quoting the high incidence of illegitimacy and venereal disease among Negro citizens. Three psychiatrists also speculated on the "traumatic damage" that integration might cause if white and Negro children went to school together. The statement by Dr. H. Tharp Posey was typical of the points made:

"Anyone who has dealt with children of school age knows how a group of white children discriminate against each other, excluding one or another from a group for purely superficial and social reasons to the hurt and sometimes lasting psychiatric damage to those discriminated against. It is affiant's opinion that the social intolerance already exhibited by white children against white children would be trifling to what the Negro students would suffer under conditions of immediate integration."

Dr. Posey does not, significantly, discuss the "psychiatric damage" already being done to white and Negro youth who are presently excluded from any social relationship with one another. Indeed, the whole mass of public-health and psychological data presented quotes the evil effects of segregation as an excuse for perpetuating segregation.

A majority of the physicians practicing in New Orleans recognize the fallaciousness of the school board's brief. Last month the executive board of the Orleans Parish medical society called a special meeting of the group to vote on a resolution which would put the society on record "as being of the opinion that it would be a distinct health hazard to integrate the races in the schools of Orleans Parish."

At the meeting the resolution was withdrawn without ever getting to the floor—despite its endorsement by the opposition. One doctor reportedly said, "Let's bury the whole thing." And another replied, "How can you bury something that stinks so bad?"

La. Catholics Fight Foes of Equality

The Roman Catholic church in Louisiana has been firmly insisting that progress be made towards racial integration in its activities, despite the opposition of influential laymen.

The excommunication of three women for attacking the teacher of an interracial catechism class gained wide notice. The three were subsequently forgiven after they did penance. Another publicized incident was the refusal of a rural congregation in St. Bernard Parish, near New Orleans, to permit a Negro priest to say mass.

The Negro priest who was turned away said that policemen were among the group who barred his entry. This is not surprising, since that section of the state is in the political empire of Leander Perez, Louisiana's top Dixiecrat. In Plaquemine and St. Bernard parishes Perez has been able to "deliver" vote majorities in key elections that have exceeded the total population. Those whites who oppose Perez—and all Negroes—have been virtually disenfranchised by a vote registrar whose books are never open when they appear.

Perez is the leading opponent of the Catholic drive for racial equality. He is also a moving force behind the "Southern Gentlemen," a secret organization devoted to white supremacy. The "gentlemen" work hand-in-glove with one W. M. Rainach, a state senator who is chairman of the legislature's joint segregation committee.

Rainach recently sent out a questionnaire to candidates in the gubernatorial race now in progress in Louisiana, asking if they would uphold the state's constitution regarding segregation and if they would refuse contributions from the NAACP, etc.

The Catholic Committee of the South in New Orleans, recognizing the source of this questionnaire as being of a kind with the wild rumor-mongers who are whispering that Louisiana's Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel "is a Communist," countered with a sharp list of questions. The organization's commission on human rights asked candidates if they would pledge to uphold the U.S. Constitution, if they would grant equal rights to all regardles of race, and finally, "Have organizations . . . now active in the promotion of viciously un-Christian and un-American beliefs in so-called white supremacy made any contributions, directly, or indirectly, to your campaign fund?"

LETTERS

To the Editor:

I had decided to not pass along a reaction I had to some copy appearing on the front of the November Patriot until I turned to the inside and read the letters from Mr. Leiffer and Mr. Moore. I then changed my mind and decided that I would be critical of the reference in the third column on the front to "Common Sense." Objective reporting to me would eliminate the words "notorious," "anti-Semitic" and "racist." Why not let the readers draw their own conclusion from a presentation of the facts, not the opinions of the reporter.

BOB CHILDERS,
Houston, Texas

* * *

A letter from a friend tells of his troubles in trying to sell an FHA house in Fort Worth, Texas because it happens to be located adjacent to Negro property; a consideration which prompted the FHA, so we discovered in negotiating the sale, to place the loan value at $1,000 less than ordinarily. This is only one of the incidental ways in which we all pay for the abominable *taste for discrimination*, all too prevalent.

Forum

(Continued from Page 1.)

The next day after listening to the committee and to George Dreyfous, representing the American Civil Liberties Union, the board finally gave grudging permission.

On the day of Dec. 15, the Rev. Allen Hackett of the Pilgrim Congressional Church, St. Louis, was the featured speaker at the historic event. It marked the first time that a public-school facility had been made available for a sympathetic public discussion of school integration. The meeting was given television coverage.

Dr. Hackett made an appropriate speaker, since his congregation was among the first in St. Louis to drop racial barriers to membership.

The forum sponsors now plan to hold a series of meetings.

HOW INTEGRATION CAME TO SAINT LOUIS

*Excerpts from forum address by Dr. Allen Hackett **

F rm, intelligent action on the part of adn inistrators and proper preparation by he community led to the racial integ ation of the public schools in St. Lou s, Mo., without serious incident, the Rev Allen Hackett, pastor of the Pilgri Congregational church in St. Louis, saic Thursday night.

He spoke at a public forum held at Rab uin school at which desegregation of s hools was discussed.

S . Louis, said the Rev. Hackett, has a t tal population of about 827,000, of which about one-fifth are Negroes. It has a public school population of 91,000 and one-third are Negro students. Approximately one-fourth of its teaching population is Negro.

Some 13 years ago, said the Rev. Hackett, Dr. Philip Hickey, superintendent of public schools in St. Louis, added a Negro to the administrative staff.

About three years later, he continued, teachers' professional groups were integrated and conferences and workshops were initiated which dealt with questions of human relations.

At about the same time, he said, St. Louis members of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, with the co-operation of school administrators, began a series of meetings for members of the community dealing with the same questions.

Concurrently, he said, an annual conference for students was set up during Brotherhood Week to which representatives from all of the schools in St. Louis came. They broke up into individual groups to hold workshops on dramatics, music and other topics.

In connection with this, approximately 150 student leaders from the various schools worked the year around on plans for the conference.

While these meetings were in progress, he said, the "three great religious groups," Protestants, Catholics and Jews worked through their churches and synagogues to create "a climate of opinion."

In May of 1954, said the Rev. Hackett, the United States supreme court rendered its decision against school segregation and the next month St. Louis' board of education voted unanimously to desegregate.

A separate-but-equal law was in existence in Missouri, he said, but it had been amended to allow individual communities to do as they wished. Too, he added, the attorney general of the state cleared the legal path by issuing an opinion holding the supreme court's decision was paramount.

In the fall of 1954, the Rev. Hackett said, schools in the system on the college and junior college level were integrated and as well as those at which the deaf, blind and handicapped, were taught.

"I suspect," he said, " 'the special services' schools were among the first integrated because the teachers there had that extra measure of compassion, that extra degree of training to handle the delicate problems that might arise."

Secondly, he said, the high schools were integrated in February, 1955, and new school districts and maps were published in the papers. Lastly, he said, the elementary schools were integrated in September, 1955.

During this period, he said community groups, mothers' clubs, churches and social agencies were all holding meetings to "prepare for this new adventure."

The transition, he said, turned out to be "forthright and orderly and brought a great deal of satisfaction and no dissatisfaction."

After his address, questions were put to the speaker by a panel made up of Clarence A. Laws, Louisiana state field secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; the Rev. Clarence H. Snelling Jr., director of the Wesley Foundation: Miss Florence Sytz, professor of social case work at Tulane university, and Fred Zengel, attorney, speaking for parents.

In answer to their questions, he said: Social agencies, churches, public office holders, organized labor and the Parent-Teacher Association had all made contributions, of varying degrees, toward solving the problem.

Segregation based on reasons of health does not help the community because it perpetuates the health problem. Negro students, at a competitive disadvantage with white students because of poor preparation, are willing to accept it because of the advantages that will accrue to them later. Negro teachers, he said, who are not as prepared as whites, are "rising to the stimulus of the challenge and the competition."

White children, he said, have accepted the transition routinely, and have exhibited little more reaction than towards the succession of football to basketball.

There has been, he said, "only one racial incident." A Negro girl was squirted with water from a water pistol, he said, and in the resulting aftermath 94 students at the school remained home one to two days. The matter, he said, was handled firmly by administrators with the co-operation of student leaders and has been forgotten.

Moderator of the forum was the Rev. John H. Telfer, chairman of the sponsors' co-ordinating committee. He said the committee would submit the name "Citizens' Forum on Integration" for the sponsors' approval as the name for their group at their next meeting.

"There were some," he said, "who were afraid for us to hold this meeting. I want to compliment you on the attentive, orderly manner in which you have listened to our speaker and on the intelligence of your questions."

Others on the program were Dr. Samuel L. Gandy, dean of the chapel at Dillard University, who gave the invocation, and Dr. Marvin L. Fair, president of the New Orleans UNESCO Council, who spoke on "The Significance of the Declaration of Human Rights and the Bill of Rights."

Mrs. Gustav R. Westfeldt, Jr., served as chairman of the meeting.

* Adapted from the New Orleans Times-Picayune, Dec. 16, 1955.

A Sponsor's Letter

Mrs. Anne K. Weitz, a social worker who was one of the forum sponsors, wrote YMBC president Denis A. Barry as follows:

"By your efforts to 'boycott' public discussion, it seems to me that you are increasing the level of emotionalism surrounding this problem; that you are using exactly the techniques you profess to deplore. To disguise your rather obvious fear of integration by promoting the red herring of 'Communist front' is scarcely democratic."

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THE SOUTHERN PATRIOT published monthly except July and August by The Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc. Office of publication, 150 10th Ave., No., Nashville, Tenn. Editorial and Executive Offices, Room 404, 822 Perdido Street, New Orleans 12, La. Twenty-five cents a copy, $2.00 a year. Entered as second-class mail matter, Nashville, Tennessee.

CHRISTMAS SONG

On this day the blackbird sings as sweet as
A licorice candy

On this day the willow tree is neat as
A Memphis dandy

On this day the mule is home among his
A-wife and children

And I am feeling good myself at all
The things I'm feeling.

On this day the hound dog's tail is wagging
Hello to the kitties

On this day the jail-house door is sagging,
Sheriff is humming ditties

On this day the thread-mill hand is eating
Cake and turkey chittlings

And I am feeling good myself at all
The things I'm feeling.

On this day the cotton bowls don't bleed so
Sore from nasty weevils

On this day a colored man don't have no
More than usual evils

On this day a dark old barn was lit by
Stars along its ceiling

And I am feeling good myself at all
The things I'm feeling.

—ALFRED MAUND.

MONTGOMERY NEGROES DECLARE BOYCOTT AGAINST BUSLINE

Enough is enough, so on Dec. 5 the Negro community in Montgomery, Ala., declared a boycott against the city's buslines. The arrest of a respected seamstress on charges of violating a jimcrow transportation ordinance set off the demonstration by 40,000 long-suffering citizens. Transportation officials admitted it was 90% effective.

Rudeness to Negro patrons is proverbial on the Montgomery line. Drivers have been said to carry pistols in their cash boxes to "settle" disputes over transfers and seating arrangements. Last summer a 14-year-old Negro girl was dragged from a bus in handcuffs by three policemen for refusing to give up her seat to a white man. Her arrest provoked wide support for an appeal to test the constitutionality of the segregation law, but further action was blocked by a circuit court ruling that dismissed the segregation count but found the girl guilty of resisting arrest.

A month after this incident, a bus driver was fined for beating up a mentally deficient Negro who had "bothered" him from the sidewalk. The driver left his vehicle and clubbed the man with a wrench.

When word of the boycott reached the newspapers — hand-lettered signs announcing the protest were posted in the Negro neighborhoods—Montgomery police commissioner Clyde Sellers said he would station guards at all stops to prevent "goon squads" from molesting would-be patrons. But although motorcycle police tailed the buses, and uniformed officers made themselves prominent along the routes, the only incidents they could claim were the arrest of a 19-year-old youth for allegedly pulling a woman from a bus door, and the report of a driver that a .22 rifle slug had been fired into the rear end of his bus.

Negro workers formed long, silently purposeful lines walking to work, or stood at street corners waiting for lifts that quickly came from passing motorists. Parents set up shuttles to get their children to and from school. The Negro taxicab companies cooperated by offering the special rate of a dime a person to any place in the city.

Miss Rosa Parks, the seamstress who had been arrested, came to trial in recorder's court that same day. Spectators overflowed the trial room and stood in the lobby. Although she had been arrested under a city ordinance, the prosecution changed the charge to that of violation of the state Jim Crow law. The city statute gives a driver power to move a patron only if another seat is available; the state law gives the driver authority to designate "sections," regardless of the seating conditions.

Miss Parks pleaded innocent. She presented no defense. Testifying for the prosecution, the bus driver involved said there had been 22 Negroes and 14 whites seated in the 36-passenger bus. He had ordered Miss Parks and others to the rear to "equalize" the seating. She had refused to give up her seat. Judge John B. Scott found her guilty and assessed a $10 fine. Her attorney immediately filed notice of appeal.

At a mass meeting at a church that night some 5,000 persons cheered Miss Parks and voted to continue the boycott until busline officials meet with a Negro committee and work out a program for ending the "intimidation, embarrassment and coercion" of Negro patrons.

Negro leaders, who have been striving to raise the pitifully low vote-registration totals among their people, were jubilant—and privately expressed surprise —at the show of unity. Such unity has been all too rare in the recent history of the Deep South; the success of this demonstration in the Cradle of the Confederacy may well inspire similar action in other Southern cities. But whether it does or not, most observers agree that it has given a sharp setback to the White Citizens Council movement that was budding there.

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